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RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK PRIORITY 3709
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 012389

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SUBJECT: FATA: TALKS AND TRUCES ON THE TABLE IN NORTH
WAZIRISTAN

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Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker, DSCG 05-01,
January 2005, Edition 1, Reason: 1.4 (B,D)

¶1. (C) Summary. Militants in North Waziristan on June 25 offered a one-month "cease-fire" on their deadly attacks on security forces and pro-government elders, if the Government of Pakistan (GOP) acquiesces on five demands. North Waziristan tribal elders re-iterated these demands during a June 27 jirga convened by the GOP's new Political Agent (PA) (and attended by over 500 tribesmen). A splinter group of militants perpetrated two deadly attacks on security forces that killed at least seven soldiers on June 26 and 27 in an apparent attempt to undercut the cease fire. With the cease-fire on the table, the GOP finds itself in a tough position, as it has encouraged negotiation and dialogue to restore peace. Acceding to the terms offered by militants will undermine GOP's efforts to seal the border and restore law and order, but not negotiating at all could bolster the cause of the militants. The GOP will have to carefully negotiate a compromise solution that addresses the concerns of the tribes but still allows room for improved law and order and border security. Separately, Interior Minister Sherpao has stressed that any negotiation would not change the government's posture towards "foreigners" and cross-border terrorism. End summary.

MILITANTS CALL CEASE FIRE; JIRGA BACKS THEM UP

¶2. (U) On June 25, North Waziristan (NW) militants--who have been attacking government and military installations and personnel since December 2005--offered a conditional one-month cease-fire through "local Taliban" spokesman Abdullah Farhad. Farhad's truce offer included five demands:

--Dismantling the 25 new checkpoints established in recent months;

--Sending FC and XI Corps troops back to their camps and reverting to the use of levy forces by July 26;
--A complete pull out of Army troops from FATA within one month;
--Releasing all militants captured during military/paramilitary operations since 2004; and
--Re-instating tribal rights that have been revoked under FCR statutes (re-opening shops in closed markets, re-instating tribals in government jobs, and paying back-pay to those who were fired).

13. (U) At the behest of newly appointed NW Political Agent Fakhr-i Alam Irfan and NWFP Governor Orakzai, over 500 tribal elders attended the first session of a jirga intended to restore law and order in the Agency. Tribal elders--represented by Jamaat-e Ulema-e Islam Fazlur Rahman (JUI-F) leader Maulana Abdur Rehman--reportedly reiterated several of the demands made by Taliban spokesman Farhad a day before. (Note: Per septel, JUI-F's central leadership voiced opposition to the "Taliban" militants and worried about law and order in recent conversations with Poloffs. Maulana Rehman, according to contacts in NW, has a relationship with the Agency's "Taliban" militants and may be voicing both JUI-F and Taliban concerns. End Note.)

ATTACKS CONTINUE BUT MILITANTS SAY TRUCE STANDS

14. (C) Less than a day after the cease-fire offer, militants launched two attacks on military installations in NW. After the first attack--a car bomb at a checkpoint outside of Miram Shah on June 26 that killed seven soldiers and injured approximately 26 others--militants claiming to be a part of the local Taliban claimed responsibility. Militant "spokesman" Farhad immediately called news stations to deny responsibility, and accused government forces of attempting to derail the cease-fire. Oddly, Farhad called a BBC

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correspondent a few hours later to change his story; he said that although one of his fellow militants may have been responsible, the cease-fire he announced would hold. Farhad has since continued to defend the attacks, claiming they were self-defense, and thus allowed under the terms of the cease-fire. In an attempt to regain control of the ceasefire, militant leaders distributed a pamphlets in Urdu throughout NW. An excerpt of the pamphlet, which was passed to us by a journalist in NW (and translated by our FSN) reads as follows: "Everyone is informed that the NWA Mujahideen have announced a one-month truce with GOP...GOP functionaries can travel freely...maliks and elders can meet with GOP leaders and should play their role in negotiations between the Mujahideen and GOP...No Mujahid has the right to roam around masked on roads...anyone in violation of this announcement will be dealt with severely."

GOP PROCEEDING CAUTIOUSLY

15. (C) Both Governor Orakzai and the NW political agent have welcomed the cease-fire as a step in the right direction. Orakzai on June 26 reiterated to reporters that he would pursue negotiations with the militants, saying that they were a part of his overall strategy to reach a compromise with tribesmen and militants through negotiations. In what has been called a goodwill gesture by commentators, the North Waziristan Political Agent released 50 militants who had been captured during operations in FATA since 2004; the 50 were declared "innocent". Federal Government officials have been slow to weigh in publicly, but in a private conversation, Interior Minister Sherpao stressed that although the negotiations were taking place, the government would not compromise on its strict posture against "foreigners" or allow cross-border terrorism.

COMMENT

16. (C) GOP officials appear to have learned from their

earlier mistake of negotiating with South Waziristan militants without also negotiating with the tribal elders of the region. In this round, Orakzai plans to simultaneously appease tribesmen; if some of the tribal elders' wishes are met, the militants will have more difficulty buying their loyalty. Officials involved in the negotiations will have to strike a delicate balance between pacifying tribesmen and militants and maintaining the operational capacity to pursue terrorists and stem cross-border infiltration.

CROCKER